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OUT OF THE SHADOWS WITH HEMI-SYNC®

by Jo Buchanan

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Four years ago, I volunteered to teach meditation, healing, and stress relief techniques at Parramatta Minimum Security Prison. After six months, the inmates clearly loved it. One day a member of the psychology staff sat in on my class to “see what was going on.” Her favorable comments to Mark Adams, the senior education officer for Parramatta, Emu Plains Farm Prison, and Mulawa Maximum Security Prison, resulted in an invitation to do a “trial run” at Mulawa. A few months later, the governor had three members of the Mulawa psychology staff monitor a session. This rather harrowing experience led to my being placed on the payroll permanently.

The aboriginal word “mulawa” translates appropriately as “in the shadows.” Mulawa is surrounded by towering electric fences topped by rolls of barbed wire and constantly patrolled by officers in blue. On my first day, in 1995, this daunting atmosphere made the sanity of my plans seem questionable. The female inmates loitered in groups, seemingly stoned out of their minds. I soon discovered that they were. Tranquilizers are dispensed freely and the medication queue forms promptly at five. It’s the high point of their day.

I was told that these women, many of whom had committed murder, were some of the most violent, aggressive inmates in New South Wales custody. They were portrayed as dark, shadowy monsters. Nothing could have been further from the truth. Most of them are victims of prolonged childhood sexual abuse. Actions taken in a moment of extreme provocation or drug addiction and its attendant behavior are the primary reasons for their incarceration. Could meditation possibly make a difference?

For the handful of women who began to attend my classes, it did. They stopped queuing for Valium® and Serepax® as they learned to achieve stress relief through the power of their minds. The class gradually expanded. Soon I was meeting with highly creative, intelligent women who had decided to take responsibility for their lives and rise above their situation.

I had been a Monroe Institute Sustaining Member for a couple of years and had already introduced the women to the quarterly tapes *Journey to Innocence* and *The Portal*, as well as *METAMUSIC® Outreach*. But conditions were extremely difficult. The participants had to lie on the floor in a circle with their heads toward my small, battery-operated tape player in the center. Without headphones or loudspeakers, the effect of Hemi-Sync must have been

minimal. However, women behind bars can respond to makeshift arrangements in extraordinary ways. Glimpses of success encouraged me, and I pondered how to manifest a miracle.

In January/February 1998, I attended the *GATEWAY VOYAGE*[®], *LIFELINE*[®], and *EXPLORATION 27*[®]. Upon hearing that Darlene Miller, PhD, TMI's director of programs, had worked in the prison system, I immediately made an appointment with her. Darlene generously donated the *POSITIVE IMMUNITY PROGRAM* for the Mulawa women, and Laurie Monroe donated *OPENING THE HEART*. I was thrilled. Back in Australia, my daughter announced that she had purchased a new sound system and offered me the old one for the prison. Simone's "old" loudspeakers were high-tech, mega-blasting beauties! The final element of the miracle was in place.

The new tapes, plus strategically placed, quality speakers had a dramatic impact. These representative excerpts are from the journals of women serving life sentences, existing in a constant state of desperation and high anxiety.

POSITIVE IMMUNITY

I feel much more relaxed. I felt good to be a part of something calming and full of self-help. I was breathing and then the gardens came. I saw the gardens and the sounds went away and I don't remember anything else. Until it was time to come back. I feel calm, kind of sad, homesick, but calm. It was good to center myself and open up to see my emotions. It can be hard to open yourself up here in gaol.

Opening to Love from OPENING THE HEART

I felt overwhelmed with power near the end of the tape. I felt power and strength and an undying passion to shout out aloud. Then I realized I was silently calling to myself. I felt so beautiful and loving to myself. I feel empowered and in control. My responsibility to myself is my responsibility. I am beautiful. I shine and love the person ME.

Every breath was one part of my body. Every part of my body was part of me. I let myself open up to me and my life. Usually I feel shame but I was full of a blissful love that it was alright. I been this beautiful woman after all. At one point I felt presence of "a man" looking at me with unconditional love. He was a spirit but he was a friend, a lover, a strong figure comforting me. My heart felt like a flower. I feel very peaceful.

Love's Power to Heal from OPENING THE HEART

I was surrounded by light and felt peaceful and relaxed. I saw two people float by. One was Maureen who has been visiting me. The other was someone I don't know. At the end of the

tape I saw all my family and friends, both alive and dead. My father, who is dead, was holding me and I spoke to him and when I woke up, I was crying.

The Australian prison system still emphasizes punishment versus rehabilitation. A few officers still ridicule my class with comments like, "Look out. Here comes the medication teacher." But, on the whole, as time has passed and results speak for themselves, acceptance and respect have increased. Because Mark Adams is a meditator, he is a constant support. The administration recently cut out singing, guitar lessons, art, and aerobics to provide more money and time for the "three R's." Mark battled for the meditation classes and won. Prisoners can turn their lives around by developing initiative, creativity, and self-esteem. The Monroe tapes address this urgent need. This evocative poem by inmate Margaret Lamont hints at the limitless possibilities.

As curses volley-shot the yard,
veer to shadow.
Don't get caught in the crossfire
in this hot-house
tinder box, holding women
separate from
and different
to draw the line and
then smudge it slightly.
It's an acquired art,
the being and the not being here.
Nights of wire and hollow bone.
Mercy, mother mercy,
fill me with darkness
and sweet rain.

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